



# Community Notes

FALL 2021

## BCHS' *Feels Like Home, Feels Like HOPE* Gala

BCHS held its first ever Virtual Gala to celebrate the extraordinary efforts of friends and allies who have done so much to strengthen our community during this challenging time.



Above top, Emcee Kimberley Locke greets our virtual gala guests with a smile.

Above, eight-time Grammy nominee Bobby Sanabria introduces his performance with his Multiverse Big Band.

Thanks to all our dedicated BCHA community members, our *Feels Like Home, Feels Like HOPE* Virtual Gala raised over \$470,000, our second highest gala total ever. This tremendous support will be vital in ensuring our life-saving work can continue, as we continue to protect the most vulnerable among us while moving forward with our efforts to bring an end to homelessness in Brooklyn.

The evening included performances by classically trained violinist Joya Bravo as well as eight-time Grammy Award nominee Bobby Sanabria and his Multiverse Big Band. Our emcee was the multi-talented Kimberley Locke, who many may recognize from Season 2 of *American Idol*. Kimberley's charm helped attendees seamlessly enjoy the virtual event, which featured an online auction of top-tier gifts including tickets to the Sports Illustrated Super Bowl After Party, an upscale getaway in the Catskills, art from top New York artists, and more.

We were humbled to spotlight our honorees: Nerou Cheng and NCheng LLP, Jonathan Vazcones and M&T Bank, and our long-time Board Member Clifford Cohen and his wife Leslie Cohen. The evening featured remarks from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky, Board Chairperson Peter Hansen, Gala Co-Chairs Natasha Fishman and Nellie Perera, as well as BCHA's Senior Leadership Team.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year and tuned in to our gala. We cannot wait to celebrate together in person next year!

## Meet Janice

Janice was only 20 years old when she gave birth to her son, Jaden, in December of 2020. Having grown up in foster care from the age of 12, Janice knew that her time with her foster family was running out, and that she was about to age out of the system.

After being referred to BCHS through another city agency, Janice arrived at Arbor Inn—our short-term housing program for homeless families—motivated to move on to greater independence.

With the help of staff Janice immediately began a job search. Having worked since she was 14, she landed multiple interviews and had two offers by the next week.

However, finding a job is just one step that homeless mothers need to take to get back on their feet. With support from her case manager, Janice began to feel more confident and opened up about her experience in foster care; staff then helped Janice secure safe childcare for Jaden, create a bank account, and begin to save her money. We are happy to say that today Janice is doing so well that she is preparing to graduate from Arbor Inn and move into her own independent apartment in the community.

In the past few years our Arbor Inn program has housed more young mothers aging out of foster care than ever before. But thanks to the help of our dedicated BCHS team, these moms find a community of people to support them as they heal and take positive steps towards well-being and independence. Just like Janice.

**“Thanks to BCHS, I feel better prepared to give my son the bright future he deserves.”**



## Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

### Dear friends,

I hope you are well, and that everyone in your family has remained healthy and safe.

I know these have been trying times. But I am proud to report that when the worst the world has to offer showed up on our doorstep in March of 2020, the very best the world has to offer answered. Our BCHS team.

Staff, Board members, and friends like you – from day one of the pandemic, everyone has sacrificed and gone above and beyond to protect our vulnerable residents.

Our staff put themselves at risk and worked around the clock. Our Board provided leadership and commitment, furthering the agency's efforts every step of the way. And you, our closest friends, reached out to us to see what we needed and what you could do to help.

**I am grateful.** And in this issue of Community Notes you will learn just how impactful these efforts have been, as the infection rate among our residents has remained remarkably low.

This past May we had a wonderful evening at our 2021 *Feels Like Home, Feels Like Hope* virtual gala – the night was a chance to celebrate the extraordinary leaders, staff, supporters and friends who have made BCHS' response to the crisis possible. I am so appreciative for all of our generous supporters who helped ensure this year's Gala was a smashing success!

Thank you for all of your support because without you, BCHS could not accomplish all that we do as we keep the most vulnerable among us healthy and safe, and as we work towards bringing an end to homelessness in Brooklyn. Wishing everyone good health and all good things for the Fall – I hope to get together with you soon!

Jeff Nemetsky  
Executive Director





# BCHS Responds to COVID-19

On March 14th of 2020, BCHS moved to hybrid operations, days before the City went on full lockdown because of COVID-19.

While it has been a difficult time for everyone, for BCHS' formerly homeless residents—many of whom have significant health issues and live with roommates and suitemates—the threat posed by COVID-19 has been even more dire.

However, thanks to our amazing BCHS community—staff, Board, and supporters—we have been able to meet this once-in-a-century moment head on.

Often putting themselves at risk, BCHS' frontline heroes have provided daily virtual and in-person counseling, nursing services, stay-at-home recreational entertainment and safe, socially distanced activities on-site, while distributing PPE, food, and medicine. We made sure the children in our programs could participate remotely in school. And when someone does get sick, we arrange a swift and comfortable quarantine for everyone impacted, so the virus doesn't spread any further.

BCHS' staff has worked 24/7 to protect the formerly homeless and at-risk children, women and men we serve, making sure that no one feels isolated or alone.

Since March of 2020, it is estimated that between 20% - 25% of all NYC residents have been positive for COVID-19; thanks to our team's efforts, during the same time, only 2% of all of BCHS' residents tested positive.

Thank you to everyone in our community for helping us keep our residents healthy and safe.



# Turning the Corner



Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our residents and community are gearing up for a hope-filled year.

BCHS has been actively involved in getting staff and residents vaccinated. We held information sessions for staff with different health-care professionals, who answered questions about vaccine safety and efficacy, and arranged Q & A forums for our residents while offering them a variety of vaccination incentives. And to make the process easier for everyone, BCHS also scheduled regular on-site vaccination opportunities at Brooklyn Gardens and Navy Green.

In recent months, the agency has also been increasing our level of face-to-face work while strictly adhering to safety protocols. For example, we re-established our on-site Horticultural Therapy program, have held weekly Movie Nights in our Brooklyn Gardens courtyard, and hosted outdoor holiday celebrations and barbecues — a favorite activity that serves to bring our community together.

Case managers and social work staff have also been seeing clients regularly, offering even more in-person counseling and support, and we are reviewing our plans and hope to bring our operations closer to normal in the months ahead, so that we may provide our full continuum of services and care.

We stand united in the face of this crisis and look forward to brighter days. Stay tuned!

# BCHS Advocacy



BCHS is excited to announce the creation of our Youth Advocacy Program. BCHS Youth Advocates are the next generation of leaders committed to carrying BCHS' torch forward in the pursuit of our mission to end homelessness in Brooklyn.

BCHS Youth Advocates raise awareness by amplifying our story on social media and sharing why they believe in BCHS' work, fundraise on behalf of the organization, and advocate in support of important public policies.

Pictured left to right: Founding Youth Advocacy Program members Lily Wass and Chris Golub. Both are rising college Juniors and New York natives, growing up in Brooklyn and the Upper West Side respectively.

# BCHS Welcomes New Board Members



We are excited to welcome four new members to the BCCHS Board of Directors: Alexandra Clarke Walsh, Harrison Green, Kamoy Smalling, and Ravi Kantha. (L to R above)

Alexandra leads the ELA business and oversees product development at Amplify, an educational publisher of K-12 curriculum and assessments. Prior to Amplify, Alexandra was at The Bridgespan Group, where she provided strategic advisory services to social sector leaders on a range of issues including education, child welfare, and government effectiveness. She started her career with Teach for America as a high school biology teacher in Louisiana.

Harrison is the Director of State Legislative Affairs at the Real Estate Board of NY (REBNY). Prior to REBNY, Harrison served as Director of Community and Government Affairs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, working across various sectors in manufacturing, tech, design, and the arts to employ local Brooklyn and New York City residents in the Yard's 400-plus businesses.

Kamoy is a Vice President at TPG Sixth Street Partners, a Global Investment Firm. Prior to joining Sixth Street in 2018, she was an Associate in the Principal Investments group at C-III Capital Partners and previously worked as Head of New York Acquisitions for Titan Partners, a special situations real estate firm.

Ravi is a founding member of the Lesser Kantha Team and a Partner & Director of Brooklyn Sales at Leslie J. Garfield & Co., Inc. Real Estate. He specializes in townhouse and building sales in Brooklyn and Manhattan. His team ranked 6th in New York and 62nd nationwide in transaction volume (REAL Trends 2019 rankings as seen in the Wall Street Journal).

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# New Housing – Kingsbrook Estates

BCHS is proud to be working with partners Monadnock Development LLC, Monadnock Construction, Inc., and CB Emmanuel Realty, LLC, to help transform part of Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center into apartment buildings with health, wellness, and support services.

Kingsbrook Estates will offer central Brooklyn 266 new units of affordable housing in 3 buildings for a range of income levels, as well as supportive housing and services for vulnerable seniors and Veterans.

On-site amenities will include a therapeutic garden, outdoor exercise equipment, children’s play areas, and an indoor teaching kitchen.

Pictured to the right is a rendering of what the new housing development will look like once fully finished in the coming years.



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